

English literature

Collecting policy

User profile

This collection statement covers provision for English Literature within the School of Languages and Literature.

The collections serve all staff and students studying English literature within DEL, and they are also used by students studying English education; and film, theatre and television as well as pre-sessional language students.

Related and interdisciplinary areas include:

- aesthetics, shared with Philosophy
- American studies, shared with History
- Beckett studies, shared with French, Philosophy and Film, Theatre and Television
- feminism, gender studies, and political issues, shared with Politics and International Relations
- multiculturalism, postcolonial and Diaspora studies, shared with Politics and International Relations
- film and theatre, shared with Film, Theatre and Television; and the School of Languages and European Studies
- historical aspects of literature, shared with History; the Graduate Centre for Medieval Studies; and the Early Modern Research Centre
- printing, communication and book history, shared with Typography and Graphic Communication
- Science in literature, especially Darwinism, shared with the Science Faculties
- Children's literature, shared with the Institute of Education, Film, Theatre and Television; and the Graduate Centre for International Research in Childhood: Literature, Culture, Media.

Research interests

The research interests of academic staff are wide ranging. The department aims to research across historical periods and genres. Its research strategy is coalesced closely around those research centres which it accommodates or with which it has close links:

- Beckett at Reading working in collaboration with the Beckett International Foundation, which supports research into Samuel Beckett and the development of the internationally important archive based in the University.
- Graduate Centre for International Research in Childhood: Literature, Culture, Media (CIRCL), which supports inter-disciplinary research into childhood.
- Early Modern Research Centre (EMRC), which focuses on cultures of print and manuscript, cultures of performance, history of ideas, and the long reformation.
- Graduate Centre for Medieval Studies (GCMS), which promotes interdisciplinary postgraduate study of the Medieval period.
- Modern and Contemporary Centre for Graduate Studies in Literature (MCC), a centre which aims to engage in research that utilises Special Collections and also embark on projects in the areas of 'Poetry'; 'Literature and Science'; and 'Diasporism, Imperialism and Transatlanticism'.

Specific research interests within the department cover almost all aspects of literary culture and genres from the Middle English period to the present day; national literatures, especially American, Canadian, Scottish and Irish literature, as well as postcolonial literatures of the Caribbean; Jewish and Holocaust literature; Creative Writing; the body, animals, medicine and science in literature; childhood and education in literature; critical theory; war narrative, travel writing, women's writing, minority identities and representation in literature; graphic novels; representations of the classical world in English literature; manuscript, book and publishing history; and poetry in translation.

The department's research interest also have close links with the University's major research themes, especially the 'Heritage and Culture' and 'Prosperity and Resilience' themes.

A full list of all programmes offered within the department can be found at:
www.reading.ac.uk/english-literature

External users: local Sixth Form students also use the collections for reference.

Dimensions of teaching and learning

The Department runs full and part-time degree programmes. English Literature can also be studied as part of a joint honours undergraduate course in combination with many other subjects including Art, Classics, History, Modern Languages, Philosophy, Politics, International Relations and Film, theatre & television. Postgraduate taught courses draw on areas such as Early Modern Studies, Samuel Beckett, Children's Literature, and Writing and Publishing History.

A full list of programmes is available at: **www.reading.ac.uk/english-literature/**

Current holdings

Most materials fall into the 800 section of the Dewey classification, especially 800 (Criticism and theory), 810 (American literature) and 820 (English Literature). Related material on film, theatre and television is located at 790.

For more detail see the English literature *Finding your way* guide.

Books

The University Library's collections in the field include primary texts and supporting criticism to support all areas taught at undergraduate and postgraduate level. Research-level monographs are also purchased to support ongoing activity, especially relating to the research centres mentioned above.

The collection now includes a large number of e-books. Individual titles purchased via aggregators such as EBL, Ebsco and MyiLibrary, and the *Cambridge Companions* online, Oxford Scholarly Editions Online, Drama Online, and Taylor and Francis packages, in particular, support undergraduate studies. To support research-level activity, the Library subscribes to the Oxford Scholarship Online literature collections; Medieval Sources Online; British Literary Manuscripts; Electronic Enlightenment; and Early English Books Online (EEBO) and Eighteenth Century Collections Online (ECCO) via JISC Historic Books for early printed books.

The University Library's collections are viewed by the Department as forming part of a wider landscape of local research materials, especially those held in the University's Special Collections. As such, the Department is willing to consider purchases for Special Collections which support its research activity from MA(Res) level upwards in collaboration with both the Library and Special Collections Services.

Multimedia

DVDs are acquired, especially of films and plays, to support teaching in areas such as 'Shakespeare on Film' and 'Children's Film, Television, and Radio'. There is also a small number of CDs of poetry.

Periodicals

A large proportion of relevant titles in the field are 'shared' with other departments, notably Modern Languages, History and Typography. A small number are also purchased directly by the Department.

Both teaching and research are supported by a wide range of titles available through JSTOR (notably the Language and Literature subject package), the Project Muse Humanities Collection and the journal packages provided by Taylor & Francis, Oxford Journals and Cambridge Journals Online. The British Periodicals collection primarily supports undergraduate dissertations, MA and research activity.

The *Times Literary Supplement* is bought from the Library's general funds.

Reference

The Library has related reference works, in its various reference collections, with those most relevant held on the 3rd Floor of the University Library. Special Collections Services also holds some literary reference tools. The *Oxford English Dictionary* is available both in print and online, as is the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

The Department also benefits from a small range of literature reference works provided through the Gale Virtual Reference Library platform as well as other aggregated reference collections such as Credo Reference and Oxford Reference Online, and specific e-book titles available from Wiley-Blackwell, such as:

- The encyclopedia of the gothic
- The encyclopedia of English Renaissance Literature
- The encyclopedia of literary and cultural theory
- The encyclopedia of Romantic literature
- The encyclopedia of the novel
- The encyclopedia of twentieth-century fiction
- The encyclopedia of British literature: 1660-1789

Bibliographic

The key bibliographic database is the MLA (Modern Language Association of America) bibliography. The Library subscribes to the online Iter gateway to the Middle Ages & Renaissance to support modules and research relating to the medieval and early modern period. The Library also subscribes to the *Year's Work in English Studies*.

The Library's General fund is used to purchase other relevant indexes, such as: *British Humanities Index*; *Index of Middle English Prose Handlists*; the *Arts and Humanities Citation Index* (via ISI Web of Knowledge), *WorldCat*, *ArticleFirst* and *Zetoc*.

The Location Register of 20th-century English literary manuscripts and letters and its supplements have been compiled by a research project at Reading University Library.

Film Indexes Online supports related film studies.

Related Special Collections

Beckett Collection

The world's largest collection of resources relating to the writer Samuel Beckett, it contains manuscript items, typescript drafts, notebooks, correspondence, stage files related to performances of Samuel Beckett's plays, editions of his work and critical texts in over 20 languages, artists' illustrated books, newspaper cuttings, audiovisual material, photographs and ephemera.

Children's Collection

Over 6,000 volumes of predominantly English, nineteenth-century children's literature.

Finzi Book Room Collection

About 6,000 printed volumes, the literature collection of the composer Gerald Finzi (1901-1956), predominantly English poetry, especially of his lifetime.

Mark Longman Library

A collection of around 4,000 books, pamphlets and journals on subjects related to the history of the book, including bibliography, book production, publishing history and practice, readers and reading, and literary biography.

Publishers' Archives

Special Collections Services has many collections relating to the British book industry, a valuable resource for the study of all aspects of book production and printing.

Other relevant special collections

Papers of: Brian Aldis, Gwendoline Courtney, Pearl Craigie, Dorothy Edwards, Edwin John Ellis, Violet Fane, Gillian Freeman, Elinor Glyn, Donald Gordon, The Group, John Guest, Althea Gyles, Hale White, John Hampson, Herberth E. Herlitschka, John Hetherington, Roy Horniman, Sir David Lean, Edward Lucie-Smith, Richard Marsh, Elkin Mathews, the Matthews collection on Shelley, Arthur Mee, Megroz, Thomas Sturge Moore, Edith Julia Morley, Edward J. O'Brien, Ian Serrailier, Robert Sherard, John Todhunter, J. C. Trewin, E.H. Visiak, John Wain, Jean Young.

Strengths and exclusions

Particular strengths of the collections include: archival, primary texts and secondary sources in the field of Samuel Beckett studies; authorship, writing, publishing; and children's literature. Secondary sources are strong in literature of the 1890s, medieval and early modern literature.

Exclusions: Non-critical biography or bibliography. The department does not aim to develop a research collection in popular fiction (i.e. in genres such as science fiction and fantasy, horror, or detective fiction), but it will support teaching in these subjects at undergraduate or postgraduate level. The purchase and retention of works in popular genres may also be considered where the writer (or particular title) is the object of study by literary scholars. Therefore, the Library will acquire and retain, where possible:

- Works in popular genres by authors represented elsewhere in the collection (e.g., Aldous Huxley, H.G. Wells, Margaret Atwood).
- Works in popular genres that are currently being taught at undergraduate or postgraduate level. (Postgraduate research materials are included in this provision.)
- Critical studies of works in popular genres by authors otherwise represented in the collect.
- Academic and critical studies of popular genres and popular fiction.
- Works shortlisted for literary prizes.
- Works by authors whose writings are the object of critical attention but whose works are exclusively in popular genres (for example, P.D. James) will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Library in consultation with the relevant members of the department.

Collecting level

Collecting is of international and national significance at some levels, and local at others.

The archive collections, especially the Samuel Beckett and Publishers Archives (which are Designated Collections), are of international importance and support research centres and research theme activity within the Department. The aim is to collect comprehensively archival, primary and secondary material in these areas. The collection of Children's literature is nationally significant and supports MA and research activity.

The Department also seeks to continue developing an extensive collection of secondary criticism in medieval and early modern areas of research activity.

Support for teaching: collections are good in all areas which are taught and most undergraduate needs are supported; sample copies of set texts are usually purchased, though students are normally required to purchase their own copies of primary texts, except where these are out of print.

Multiple copies of accompanying critical works will normally be purchased for seminar groups of over ten students, though where possible, the preference is now to acquire e-books rather than multiple print copies of criticism. There is a wide range of literary texts and critical material to support undergraduates writing independent extended essays and dissertations. Students sometimes consult primary sources (archives / rare books), especially at dissertation level.

To support teaching in new modules and research, the Department will be developing its collection of primary texts and criticism in modern and contemporary writing (especially poetry) and post-colonial literature.

Alternative access

Other information resources in the University

The Department has an extensive collection of some 2,000 videos and supplementary reading in the Geoffrey Matthews Collection. The Centre for Ephemera Studies collection and other collections in the Department of Typography and Graphic Communication hold other resources for the study of book production.

Use of other libraries

Other libraries used include: BBC Written Archives Centre; College and University Libraries in Oxford and Cambridge; British Film Institute (to which Reading University Library has an institutional subscription); the British Library; the Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington; the Huntington Library, California; the London Library; The National Archives, Kew; and the National Art Library (for children's literature).

The Department also makes medium to high use of the Inter-Library Loans service.

Selection, acquisition and stock editing

See the General Collection Development Statement for general principles.

New scholarly editions of texts are acquired. Older scholarly editions, especially those dating from the 'new bibliography' movement (from ca 1890) are usually retained but have mainly been relegated to closed access stores.

Important research level materials may be acquired in the original language (e.g. critical material relating to Beckett).

Outdated children's fiction in the Teaching Practice Collection formerly held at Bulmershe Library should be considered for retention and transfer to closed-access storage or to the Children's Collection (Special Collections), to support the MA and research activity in children's literature. Areas of particular interest include: school stories, postcolonial and African American children's literature; film, radio and television tie-ins, comic and horror genres, reading schemes, fairy tales, myths and legends, gender and sexuality issues in children's literature.

Other literature and critical works contained within the Library's Bulmershe collections will be assimilated into the main sequences during the period covered by this policy.

Policy written by Kerry Webb, English Literature Liaison Librarian, August 2015